

March 11, 1970

Dr. A.J. Haagen-Smit  
Chairman  
Air Resources Control Board  
Sacramento, California

Dear Dr. Haagen-Smit,

I read that you have been conducting hearings on lead- containing gasoline additives. In my view the potential health hazards of atmospheric lead have been grossly underplayed in the representations by automotive and petroleum industries alike. I take the liberty of enclosing some thoughts on the question. It is true that none of the indicated literature gives unequivocal evidence of direct hazard to human health at the concentrations ordinarily encountered.

I would, however, also like to draw you attention to a very recent report from Helsinki giving strong evidence of a very considerable inhibition of red cell enzymes by rather modest levels of lead compared to those found in usual urban populations. As the authors point out the pathological significance of this enzyme inhibition is still unsettled but this information can hardly be overlooked in an assessment of the potential hazards. It should also be hardly necessary to point out the grim possibilities of interaction of biochemical effect from this source with those from many others in the environment.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr  
Enclosures